

TRI-COUNTY EMC

*foreman sets
a new speed
record for
poletop rescue*



Top photo: Leonard Person of Tri-County EMC in his record-setting poletop performance preparing to lower the dummy.

Above: After making his Mayday call, he heads for the pole.

(Photos by Michael E.C. Gery)

After he finished second in the statewide Poletop Rescue Competition last time, Leonard Person of Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation vowed he would place first the next time. He had placed second the time before, and second the time before that, and third the time before that. Sure enough, when his turn came up at the November 2003 competition, he not only won, he also set a new speed record.

A right-of-way crew foreman from Dudley, Leonard Person has been climbing trees and poles for 28 years and has competed in several tree-climbing competitions. He has a utility pole in his back yard that he uses for fun and practice. It's paid off. He's won cash prizes each time he's competed in the Poletop Rescue Competition. His first-prize earning in November 2003 was \$1,000.

To reach the Raleigh competition, linemen from the state's electric cooperatives must first win the poletop rescue championship among contenders from their co-op. Poletop rescue

is an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirement. The North Carolina electric cooperatives set the standard that each lineman must receive annual training and must perform the drill in less than five minutes. The drill consists of a lineman making a Mayday call, donning climbing gear and tools, climbing 20 feet up a pole, safely lowering a 120-pound dummy and initiating lifesaving procedures. The statewide event – held every two years — is organized and judged by members of the co-ops' statewide Job Training and Safety program, directed by Tommy C. Greer.

Leonard Person's record-setting time was 1 minute, 37.99 seconds.

Frank McIntyre of Pee Dee EMC finished second at 1:46.15. Alan Grooms of French Broad EMC (the 2001 winner) was third at 1:57.10. Dean Stone of Union Power was fourth at 1:59.34. Shay Reed of EnergyUnited was fifth at 2:05.22.

Randolph EMC's Dave Rowe provided commentary to the crowd that assembled for the event outside a shopping mall near the cooperatives' statewide office in Raleigh. Rowe is a commentator for Jefferson-Pilot Sports and former defensive standout for the Super Bowl champion Oakland Raiders.